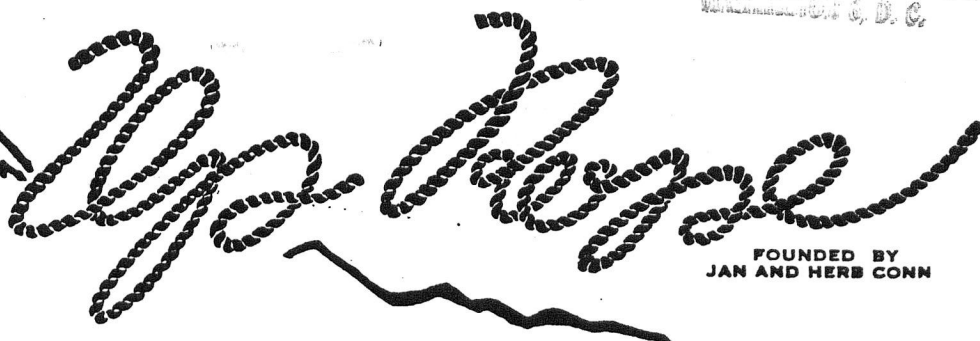




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FOUNDED BY
JAN AND HERB CONN

NEWS OF THE P.A.T.C. MOUNTAINEERING COMMITTEE

1916 Sunderland Place N. W. Washington 6, D. C.

Volume XV Number 3

February 1960

COMING EVENTS

The Sunday trips will be subject to last minute change in case of bad weather.

February 2 Tuesday 8 p.m., annual meeting at the home of Sterling Hendricks, 1118 Dale Drive, Silver Spring, Maryland. There will be an election of officers and Art Andraitis will show pictures of Japan and Formosa.

February 7 GREAT FALLS, Virginia.

February 14 SUGAR LOAF, Maryland. Subject to changes in the weather.

February 20-22 WARM RIVER CAVE, Allegheny county, Virginia. This trip will be limited to experienced cavers only. Ted Schad, leader --Central Commissary -- bring own lunches. Call Betty Johnson at Emerson 2-4789 for more information and registering before February 17, Wednesday. The cave involves crawling and swimming through water (70 - 90 degrees) passages including complete immersion at one point. Each participant must have a carbide lamp and a supply of extra carbide in a waterproof container. You should have tennis shoes to wear in the water and dry clothes for the trip out of the cave. We will spend the three nights at the NSS cabin on Bull Pasture River, 1.5 miles northwest of Williamsville, Virginia on the road between Williamsville and McDowell. The road to cabin crosses cattle guard and angles down hill on the east side of highway toward the river. NSS sign on gatepost. The cabin is equipped with eating and cooking utensils but sleeping bags and air mattresses are needed. There are 8 bunks and room for four on the floor. Fee for cabin is 50c a night. It is absolutely necessary to register. First come get to sleep in the cabin, the others will have to sleep out doors. Those unable to make the Saturday trip can meet us at the cabin Saturday night and join us in another cave yet to be determined on Sunday and Monday.

February 28 Camp Lewis and meeting at Cabin John Field House at 6:30 p.m. Local slides and pictures will be featured. If you have any pictures just to pass around and show people, be sure to bring them on this day.

March 6 Belay practice with Oscar at CARDEROCK.

The nominating committee consisting of Jane Showacre and Chuck Wettling, has nominated the following:

Bob Adams Chairman

Ed Worrell, Bob Mole, and Jim Shipley Vice-chairman

Please read the January issue of UP ROPE for rules on voting:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Bob Moles article on Cloud Watching has created quite a stir in our midst. Mary Vincett sends in the following:

When the climbers are all roped and set for action,
And nearly everyone is on a climb,
There are those who seem to derive satisfaction,
From pursuit of an entirely different
kind.

Is it cloud watching, or could we
Ascribe it to velleity?

And now a closing word from The Good Book:

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow;
and he that regardeth clouds shall not reap."

Ecclesiastes XI, 4

Erich Heinemann was in town last month and says hello to everyone. We hope that he will come out climbing with us one of these travelling weekends.

Chris Scoredos would like it know that he is out every Sunday even if his name does not appear on the UP ROPE lists. We're sorry Chris. You will just have to get to H.J.'s for the signing in I guess.

FLASH

JAM BOX RECLIMBED

The Jam Box which had successfully repelled all attempts since Tony Soler's one time ascent, today capitulated to both Ed Worrell and James Shipley. Despite near freezing weather and the advice of numerous onlookers our hero's determination finally payed off, when Ed Worrell made the first climb since 1951. Jim Shipley, following in Ed's footsteps, also managed the impossible.

Art Andraitis

Thanks to Art, Alan Talbert and Johnnie Adams we managed to get UP ROPE out with the above last minute news item. Ed.

THE CANNON MOUNTAIN ACCIDENT

Major Gerald J. Perry, Jr. USA

This past summer there was quite a stir in the newspapers concerning a "mountaineering" accident on Cannon Mountain at Franconia, New Hampshire. The papers, as usual, played up the sensational aspect of the affair the death of the two boys in the presence of the leader of the rescue rope. The press neglected to inform the public that these young men were not mountaineers.

The face involved, the east side of Cannon Mountain, is some 800 feet of down sloping strata crowned by a slab and earth dome. The instability of the wall is well demonstrated by a large freshly scarred talus slope at its foot. The weather in this area is unpredictable. Sudden weather reversals often occur. Changes within 6 hours may be from 90 degrees and clear and calm to 33 degrees with rain and 65 mile an hour winds.

On a clear day last August two young men came into this area. They had read a bit on mountaineering but had no practical experience. They were equipped with two 40 foot lengths of rope, a carpenter's hammer, some home made "pitons" of concrete reinforcing iron and a light pack. They wore light summer apparel and sneakers. After staying overnight at a nearby camp ground they set off late in the morning to climb the east face of Cannon. No special attention was paid the boys until about 5 p.m. when a tourist examining the wall from the highway saw them through his binoculars. They appeared to be perched on a small ledge. One of the lads was waving something white. The tourist felt that the waving indicated exuberance.

A short while later the incident was casually mentioned to a State Recreational Department employee who went to see for himself. The waving was still going on and the state employee recognized they were in trouble. His estimate of their height on the wall was 50 or 60 feet. After notifying the police and the Tramway officials, (it was now after 6 o'clock) the state man and a colleague (neither one a mountaineer) took a short rope and thinking they could throw it to the boys ascended the talus slope in an effort to effect a rescue. Upon arriving at the foot of the wall it was found that the climbers were too far up to reach with a thrown rope, well over 300 feet above. Further, the boys could not be seen from the foot of the wall. It was ascertained, however, that the boys were in good shape and cheerful, they just wanted to get down.

Since darkness was coming on (the weather was still clear) one of the State men went for help; the other remained to mark the area. By the time he reached the highway it was dark. A party with blankets, lights and a radio was dispatched to the foot of the cliff and the police had a searchlight set up on the highway. The light coupled with the police loudspeaker system enabled those on the highway to both see and hear the stranded boys. They continued to be cheerful and confident, though getting chilly, apparently considering the affair somewhat of a lark. There was a mountaineer in the area, the guide at the tramway. However alone he could do nothing. Therefore climbers in nearby communities were contacted in an effort to form a climbing team to get the lads down. The rescue effort waited until six-thirty the following morning when a party was finally assembled at the foot of the mountain.

The weather had begun getting colder during the night. The temperature started dropping, a fog formed in the notch and the wind came up. The climbers could only be seen through gaps in the fog. By the time the rescue party assembled the winds were reaching 55 MPH in gusts and intermittent rain was falling.

UPS AND DOWNSJanuary 10 GREAT FALLS, Maryland

Don Hubbard
 Betty Johnson
 Bob Mole
 Peter Morgan
 Chuck Wettling
 Grace Wahba
 Willa May Walters
 Lee Sturgil
 The Adams Family

Harold Kramer
 Chris Scoredos
 Fred Barker
 Ed Worrell
 Mary Vincett
 Walt Kuckes
 Dave Horwitz
 Jim Shipley
 Joe Faint

Larry Lepley
 Mike Nicholson
 Joan --
 Sam Goldin
 Ron Goughnour
 The Edlers.

The above names are more or less in order of appearance on the scene. It makes interesting reading and besides it's easier for the editor. One correction -- A. Talbert was no. 8 on the list. This was practically a spring day and the Red Overhang and the Bulge had plenty of working over. Bobbie Adams is soon going to put everyone to shame -- he climbed the Bulge, of course. Most of the day was spent with the new comers -- very pleasant indeed.

January 17 SPITZBERGEN, Maryland

Don Hubbard
 Betty Johnson
 Chuck Wettling
 The Adams Family
 Harold Kramer
 Willie Walters
 John Reed

Peg Keister
 Joe Faint
 Fred Barker
 Jim Shipley
 Ed Worrell
 Art Andraitis
 Alan Talbert

Jackie Dupont
 Sam Goldin
 Jake Haun
 Bob Mole
 Ted Schad
 Dave Horwitz
 The Blinns

In spite of some little confusion as to exactly where the Spitzbergen area is, the crew eventually gathered in the sheltered sunny corner just below the Spitzbergen climb to indulge in a lazy day of cloud-watching, coffee drinking, and similar related activities. Such climbing as was done was pretty well confined to the face just upstream from the Spitzbergen and to the small balance slab, which was attacked, with various degrees of success in boots, kletterschuhe, sneakers, and bare feet. As usually seems to be the case, the type (or lack) of footgear seemed less important than the skill of the operator thereof -- Betty, Bob Adams, Chuck, Jim, and Alan demonstrated sufficient imagination to imagine enough holds to climb it. Your reporter was singularly unimaginative, so, armed with borrowed hardware and ably seconded by Bob Mole and Hal Blinn, he vented his wrath in nailing a tension route up the Spitzbergen climb. Later Bob, Hal, Betty, Willie, Fred, Ed, and Jim demonstrated their skill as rock engineers by climbing the same route, apparently so they could make snide remarks about the way the pitons were driven (The length of the above list clearly shows that their criticisms were unjustified!)

Some discussion developed about the possibility of using a karabiner block and tackle arrangement, such as Jim Shipley demonstrated, to raise an injured person up a vertical wall. With a little experimentation it was found that it was practical and Ed made the first recorded no-handed ascent of the Spitzbergen.

Late in the afternoon there was a mass migration to the PURPLE HORSE, but your reporter, noting the gathering dusk, betook himself to Towneys* for refreshment

J.R.

(* Only to find that three others were even more observant. Ed.)

As it became light the rescue party started its work in the increasingly heavy rain, despite the hazardous climbing conditions. The most obvious approach to the problem, that of taking the tramway to the top and rappelling down was considered impractical for two reasons! First, the rain had softened the earth on the dome so the danger of starting a slide of dirt and loose rock was severe, second, the chance of fixing a spot above the lads in the storm and actually rappelling down to them was a thousand to one. An approach up the face was decided upon.

The rescue team was forced to climb slowly and carefully on the wet rock in the high winds - water was pouring down the face and the chill was doing its usual work of stiffening hands and muscles. Several ropes of climbers were used by the rescue team. The first rope was forced to turn back within sight of the boys due to fatigue and exposure. The second rope using the route of the first reached the lads at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The youngsters were on a very narrow ledge about 3 feet long. They had tied themselves in to several old pitons. One of the boys died immediately after the arrival of the leader of the second rope on the ledge, the other after being lowered to a more secure spot a rope length below. After beginning the evacuation of the second boy it was determined that nothing more could be done for them and that since dark was coming on, further delay would place the rescuers in jeopardy. The bodies were therefore secured and the rescue team pulled off the wall. The following day the bodies were retrieved from the mountain, using the usual techniques, and carried to the highway.

The primary cause of the incident was of course the lack of experience and judgment on the part of the youths. They shouldn't have been on the mountains and having gotten there shouldn't have disregarded the omnipresent Appalachian Mountain Club signs warning hikers and climbers of the weather hazard and suggesting extra clothing; the deaths were from simple exposure.

There are, however, several contributing factors to the tragedy the elimination of any one of which might have prevented the final outcome. First, there is no requirement in the immediate area that hikers and climbers register for outings. Such a requirement might well have screened out these obviously unskilled and improperly equipped climbers. Secondly, the early observer's gross error in height estimation (50 feet as against over 300) delayed the start of the rescue many hours. Lastly, there appears to be no system or organization of climbers immediately available on an "on call" basis prepared to do rescue work of this sort. A number of rescue team members came up from Massachusetts, although many skilled mountaineers are known to reside in the White Mountain Area. This sort of system with a team of climbers always on an available alert basis during the climbing season works very well in the north west.

(A complete report given by the rescuers is available in the last issue of Appalachia. See also the December issue of Summit. Ed.)

* * * * *

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